



IMPACT OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE ON FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AMONG YOUTH

Mr. Abilash Chandran¹ | Ms. Lakshmi R²

¹ Associate Professor, Department of Social Work, Christ College (Autonomous) Irinjalakuda, Thrissur, Kerala, India.

² Master of Social Work (MSW) Department of Social Work, Christ College (Autonomous) Irinjalakuda, Thrissur, Kerala,

ABSTRACT

As people who are transferred from the innocence of childhood to the adult maturity, youths express a confused and highly energetic life pattern. They are usually vulnerable and get in encounter with many negative factors. It results in the origin and development negative changes in the behavioral patterns, and thereby in the dysfunction of the basic institution of a society, family, and to the dysfunction of other inter connected social institutions and finally of the entire society. Researches make it evident that the use of drugs without proper medical prescription is increasing among youths. Apart from personal adversities, substances abuse may result in family crisis and jeopardize many aspects of family life. Its addiction influences their psychological and cognitive conscience strongly and freezes their real feelings, emotions and logical sense and loses their confidence to face the real life. Substance abuse among youths eventually but directly prevents the stable development of the nation. This research paper discusses the concept of substance abuse, and tries to find out its impact on family relationships among youths within the age limit of 17-22 who consult de addiction centers with special reference to Thrissur district, Kerala along with strategies to tackle down the issue.

KEYWORDS: Adolescence, youth, substance abuse.

1. INTRODUCTION

Youth is a complex period of development in the life of every human with extreme level of energy and enthusiasm. They become vulnerable to almost all the new and attractive elements of the life. Their energetic attitude can be directed to the right or the wrong path. Here a youth needs guidance in the right manner. In the absence of such guidance, they come in encounter with the negative factors. The changes occur in the behavioral patterns of a person due to this, can make an adverse impact in various dimensions like psychological, physical, social, and financial. It leads to the dysfunction of the social institutions, primarily of the family. Family is a domestic group of people with some degree of kinship – whether through blood, marriage, or adoption. Each child is nurtured, respected, and grows up to care for others and develop strong and healthy relationships.

1.1 Adolescent's development stage – a period of transaction

Adolescence is the age when the individual becomes integrated into the society of adults, the age when a child no longer feels that he is below the level of his elders but equal. Conformity to the standards of the youth culture has had two profound and serious effects. It causes alienation and protest against the adult culture and, it is a poor preparation for entrance into the adult society marked by adult values. There are many universal concomitants of the changes that occur during adolescence. One is heightened emotionality, the intensity of which depends on the rate at which the physical and psychological changes are taking place. Second, the rapid changes with sexual maturing make young adolescents unsure of themselves. Third, changes to their bodies, interests, and in the roles the social group expects them to play create new problems. Fourth is the change in values. Fifth, most adolescents are ambivalent about changes. While they want and demand independence, they often dread the responsibilities that go with independence and question their ability to cope with these responsibilities.

They often consider their parents old-fashioned. Family members resent adolescents' hypercritical attitudes toward them and the general pattern of family life. The more active life of adolescents may result in the breaking of family rules. An adolescent who has a very close relationship with the family member will identify with that person and want to develop a similar personality pattern. When family relationships are marked by friction, feelings of insecurity are prolonged, and adolescents will be deprived of the opportunity to develop more mature patterns of behavior. The adolescent whose family relationships are unfavorable may also develop poor relationships with people outside the home. This militates against good social adjustments. Irresponsibility as shown in neglect of studies, in favor of having a good time and winning social approval, an overly aggressive, feelings of insecurity, which cause the adolescent to conform to group standards in a slavishly conventional manner are the common danger signals of adolescent maladjustment.

1.2 Adolescent period and Drug abuse

Status symbols are prestige symbols that tell others that the person who has them is superior or has a higher status in the group than other group members. The status symbols tell others that the adolescent has a high socio economic status than other members of the peer group; that the adolescent is an accepted member of it because of appearance or actions similar to those of other group members; and

that adolescent has a near-adult status in society. They engage in premarital sex, smoking, drinking, and use of drugs to symbolize their near-adult status and their identity with the peer group.

The use of drugs, at least the smoking of marijuana, among youths at functions becomes widespread. Many who are not satisfied with marijuana turn to drugs that are more habit-forming and harmful to health. Studies of why adolescents begin to use drugs have revealed that many adolescents are motivated by a desire for independence from family restrictions; by conforming to the pattern of behavior set by leaders in the peer group; or by a desire for adventure. Gulas and King, from studies of the personality patterns of users and nonusers of drugs during adolescence, have concluded that there are certain personality characteristics that distinguish users from nonusers.

1.3 Effects of drug abuse on family

The effects of substance abuse frequently extend beyond the nuclear family. Extended family members may wish to ignore the person abusing substances. Intergenerational effects of substance abuse can have a negative impact on role modeling, trust, and concepts of normative behavior, which can damage the relationships between generations. Drug users find themselves isolated from their families. Reilly (1992) describes several characteristic patterns of interaction, which are likely to be present in a family because of substance abuse: negativism, parental inconsistency, parental denial, miscarried expression of anger, self-medication, and unrealistic parental expectations. A restructuring of the entire family system is the remedy for all these problems.

In a general population sample of 10- to 20-year-olds, roughly 12.4 percent met criteria for a substance use disorder (Cohen et al. 1993). Drugs play a prominent role in violent death for youth, including homicide, suicide, traffic accidents, and other injuries. Aside from death, drug use can lead to a range of possible detrimental consequences like violent behavior, delinquency, psychiatric disorders, risky sexual behavior, possibly leading to unwanted pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases, neurological impairment, developmental impairment, etc. Drug use may lead to cognitive deficits and perhaps irreversible brain damage. Adolescents who use drugs are likely to interact primarily with peers who use drugs, so relationships with friends, including relationships with the opposite sex, may be unhealthy, and the adolescent may develop a limited repertoire of social skills.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 GENERAL OBJECTIVE

- To find out the effects of substance abuse among youths.
- To find out the major changes in family relationships due to substance abuse among youths.
- To find out the strategies to cope with the issue of substance abuse among youths.

2.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

a) **Research design:** The design followed for this study is descriptive design.

b) **Sampling method:** The researcher selected 60 young people within the age

limit of 17-22 as samples from the clients of different de addiction centres Thrissur district, Kerala, India. The method used here for the sampling is stratified sampling technique.

c) Tools of data collection: Tools of data collection were direct personal interview.

d) Pilot Study: Pilot study was conducted to find out the scope and feasibility of the study, to determine the venue and universe of the study. To know about the feasibility of the study the researcher interacted with different de addiction centre authorities, clients and their family members.

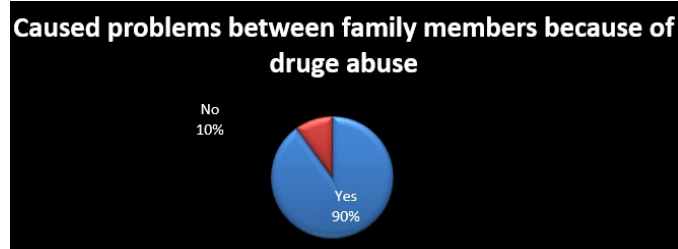
e) Universe: All the adolescents within the age limit of 17-22 who consult de addiction centres in Thrissur district Kerala.

f) Unit of The Study: One adolescent, whose age falls within 17-22 and consults a de addiction centre in Thrissur district Kerala.

3. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

According to the survey conducted among 60 people within the age limit of 17-22 who consult any de addiction centre in Thrissur district, Kerala, 54% of people spend 12 hours to 24 hours a day with their family. At the same time, 36% of people spend 5 hours to 11 hours and 10% of people spend only 1 hour to 4 hours a day with their family respectively. It is evident from the data that 46% of people do not spend a complete day with their family. It emphasizes the withdrawal of people from the bonds of family relationships.

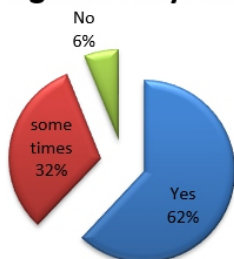
54% of people communicate effectively with their entire family members whereas 46% of people do not maintain proper communication with their family members. Effective and timely communication is one of the basic factors for strong family relationships. But here occurs a kind of communication gap in the lives of many people who get addicted to drugs. Such a lack of effective communication affects the family bonds or it can be considered as a symptom of breakdown of family relationships.



The information gained from the survey states that 90% of people had to face problems between their family members because of drug abuse while only 10% of people did not have any similar experience. It can be understood from the data that drug abuse causes serious and critical issues in a majority of families.

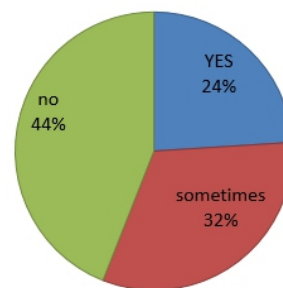
The survey also observed the eating pattern of families. It is surprising to know that 56% of people used to have food alone. 20% of people eat food sometimes with the family and sometimes alone. On the other hand, 24% of people are having food with their families. The distance voluntarily or unknowingly occurs among family members as having food together is a major symbol of creation and maintenance of strong family bonds. Here more than half of the people are not having food together with family members which implies the deterioration of family relationships due to substance abuse.

Stealing tendency in family



Another aspect revealed from the survey that 62% of youths possess stealing tendency in families whereas 32% express the same sometimes. Only 6% of youths do not feel stealing tendency in family although they consume drugs. The fact is really relevant, shocking and it requires to be analysed well as it remarks a major adverse change in the personality of the youths because of drug abuse. They tend to steal money or things from their own family, and later from outside, with the influence of the addiction of such substances. It predicts the high possibility of a serious issue of making the new generation criminals and thieves due to substance abuse. Apart from the personal issues, the family relationships also get affected with the problem.

Participation in family Functions



On the basis of the information collected directly from the youths who consult any de addiction centre, it was understood that 44% of them fail or give up in participating family functions. 32% are taking participation only sometimes and 24% assure their participation in the family functions. Family functions are meant for the strengthening and enhancing of relationships. The constant absence of drug addicted youths in family functions remarks their tendency of withdrawal from family bonds and social life, or the neglect they face from the part of their own family. It is a major symptom that makes an awareness of how substance abuse causes one's personal and social life, and their family relationships.

4. MAJOR FINDINGS

- The consumption of drugs among youths has increased in the present scenario.
- Substance abuse causes major changes in the behavioural patterns of its users, especially of youths.
- It results in the psycho social problems in the youth life.
- The family relationships get broken with the issues raised out of substance abuse among youths.
- The impact of substance abuse among youths on the family relationships affects the entire society.
- Preventive actions in the collective level such as awareness programmes, trainings, motivation and value education classes, cultural programmes and celebrations in order to make the family and social bonds stronger and everlasting, and effective monitoring, preventive and corrective measures against substance abuse with the cooperation of schools and colleges where the youths spend their most of time and of the governmental authorities should be taken as early as possible.

6. CONCLUSION

Adolescence is a complex phase in human development where a major transition takes place in both physical and psychological levels. They are the most essential part in the development of a nation. In this period, most of the youths tend to avoid the dependency on family and at the same time, they are in crucial need of the family's support and guidance. Their healthy and reasonable life pattern is inevitable for the advancement of social wellbeing. Family relationship is the basic factor which nourishes human values and knowledge among youths for the same goal. During the phase, they are exposed to various negative elements among which drugs are of great importance. Substance abuse causes multi-dimensional personality and social changes, especially in the lives of youths. The substance abuse among adolescents affects their family relationships to a great extent. It results in the arousal of many issues which spread to the entire society. This research paper reaches in the conclusion that substance abuse, especially among youths, causes their personal life and their family relationships in a negative manner and it affects the nation as a whole. Preventive and corrective measures should be taken to save the youths, the builders of the future of the nation, from the traps of substance abuse.

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